

Matthew 17:1-13 - *Through Jesus God Speaks*

Section 1: 17:1-9 – Listen to Jesus

For this passage of Scripture, we are going to examine words and phrases to better understand the significance of the moment.

Transfigured

Jesus had His 12 disciples but often He would take Peter, James and John aside. In this case they get to experience Jesus transfigured before their eyes. The Greek word for transfigured is where we get our word metamorphous. This speaks of Jesus completely changing before their eyes. What was the change? Jesus removed the outer garment of His fleshly body to reveal the glory that was being veiled.

We know the description given: “His face shone like the sun; His clothes became as white as the light” is a revealing of His glory because of Revelation 1:12-16: *¹² Then I turned to see whose voice it was that spoke to me. When I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³ and among the lampstands was one like the Son of Man, dressed in a robe and with a golden sash wrapped around his chest. ¹⁴ The hair of his head was white as wool—white as snow—and his eyes like a fiery flame. ¹⁵ His feet were like fine bronze as it is fired in a furnace, and his voice like the sound of cascading waters. ¹⁶ He had seven stars in his right hand; a sharp double-edged sword came from his mouth, and his face was shining like the sun at full strength. (CSB)*

Jesus was, is and will always be fully God. His glory was always with Him. He never set aside or rejected His glory. For our sake He veiled it for a time. And this passage shows us that just because His glory was veiled from our eyes doesn't mean that it wasn't there. Jesus was always fully God while walking among us and walking to the cross.

Shelters

The Greek word here is better translated tabernacle. Peter wanted to build three tabernacles for Jesus, Moses and Elijah. Peter often had the uncanny ability to mean well but say the wrong thing. What Peter did in this moment was put Jesus, Moses and Elijah on equal ground. Moses and Elijah were great prophets of God, but they will never be equal to Jesus.

Jesus is unlike any man because He is fully God and fully man. This is a mystery that we may not fully understand this side of Heaven. Nevertheless, we must trust that Jesus was, is and will forever be fully God. We cannot do as Peter and so many do and place Jesus any lower than God. He is not a great prophet, He is not a great teacher, He is not Elijah, He is not just a man...He is the Son of God. We must have a right understanding of who Jesus is.

A Voice from the Cloud

Who is the voice in the cloud? God the Father. Why does He speak? To clarify that Jesus is different from Moses and Elijah. By declaring Jesus to be His Son, the Father is saying that Jesus is of the exact same nature as Him. While believers are talked of as being “children of God” we are only given that title through adoption (Rom. 8:15, 23; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5). Jesus is different, He is the very essence of God Himself (Heb. 1:3).

In calling Jesus His “beloved” Son, the Father is revealing the type of relationship they share. One of divine nature and divine love. Not only is the Son beloved, but He is pleasing to the Father. Everything Jesus did and said was pleasing to the Father. This is because of the unique relationship experienced between the Trinity (Father, Son and Spirit). Jesus explains a little about this relationship in John 5:19 and 8:29:

“Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner.’” (CSB)

And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.” (CSB)

The Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are in perfect unity. Always working for the same purpose.

Listen to Him

Who are we to listen to? Jesus. Why are we to listen to Jesus? I believe Hebrews 1:1-4 gives us a clear understanding of why: *“Long ago God spoke to our ancestors by the prophets at different times and in different ways. ² In these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son. God has appointed him heir of all things and made the universe through him. ³ The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact expression of his nature, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. ⁴ So he became superior to the angels, just as the name he inherited is more excellent than theirs. (CSB)”*

Raised from the Dead

Jesus going to the cross was always the plan. Jesus came with a purpose. He came to *“save His people from their sins.”* (Matt. 1:21 CSB). Jesus understood His purpose and fully embraced His mission.

Application

God has revealed Himself to us through Jesus. Therefore, you cannot know God without intimately knowing Jesus. The gospel is the key that opens that door. Jesus coming to live a perfect life, dying on the cross, resurrecting from the dead and ascending into Heaven is the key that opens a relationship of eternal significance. Do you know Jesus? Not about Him, but do you know Him personally?

I cannot stress it enough, how you see Jesus is extremely vital. You must see Him as the Son of God. Fully God, fully man. He is more than a good teacher, more than a prophet and so much more than an earthly king. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Who do you say He is?

Discussion Questions

- ❖ When you think of Jesus do you picture the description in Revelation 1:12-16?
- ❖ Do you prioritize people or possession above Jesus? Why? Why should we fight against doing that?
- ❖ Listening to Jesus is vital. How have you designed your lifestyle to make sure you are listening to Jesus?
- ❖ Why is knowing Jesus personally so important?

Section 2: 17:10-13 – Listen to the Message about Jesus

The Israelites were always looking for Elijah and the coming Messiah. They desperately wanted to see that day. So why did they miss it? They were so consumed with their own ideas about who the Messiah should be they missed Him.

God wants to be known. He has clearly revealed Himself through His Word. It’s easy to allow our desires to drive our thoughts and feelings. But we must challenge that inclination. God’s Word should always be trusted over our personal desires, experiences and traditions. The Israelites wanted to conquer the area of Israel so bad they lost sight of God’s Word.

This brings us to an interesting topic of discussion. Why Moses and Elijah? I believe this a picture of Jesus and John the Baptist. You had Moses who was the one that proclaimed the old covenant by giving the law. Now you have Jesus bringing the new covenant by shedding His blood. Elijah was considered to be the greatest of prophets. And John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah to make the path straight for the Messiah.

Discussion Questions

- ❖ How easy is it for you to get distracted?
- ❖ What plays a larger role in determining how you view God: personal desire, personal experience, tradition or the Bible?